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*Governor*



**KARYN POLITO**  
*Lt. Governor*

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## **Baker-Polito Administration Releases Council on Aging's Blueprint to Promote Healthy Aging in Massachusetts**

*AARP Welcomes Commonwealth to its Age-Friendly Network*

**BOSTON** – A year after launching the [Governor's Council to Address Aging](#) in Massachusetts, Governor Charlie Baker was joined by Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders, Council Co-Chair Eileen Connors and AARP Board President Eric J. Schneidewind today to officially release the Council's initial recommendations and priorities, and formally mark the Commonwealth's membership in [AARP's Network of Age-Friendly States](#).

"We need to think differently about aging in Massachusetts," **said Governor Baker**. "This isn't just about acknowledging a shift in our demographics; it's about being intentional in our planning to ensure that those who grew up, raised families and built our communities, can continue to contribute their energy, experience and talents where they live and make Massachusetts the most age-friendly state."

Cities and towns across Massachusetts are working to support our aging population," **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito**. "We look forward to reviewing the council's recommendations and taking action to make Massachusetts a leader on providing opportunities for older adults to continue thriving in the Commonwealth."

Today there are more people over the age of 60 than under the age of 20 living in the Bay State. Older adults are the largest and fastest growing segment of the population in the U.S., and it is estimated that they will make up 23 percent of the Commonwealth's population by 2035.

In April 2017, the Baker-Polito administration launched the [24-member Council](#), with representatives from government, business, non-profit, philanthropic, health and education sectors to provide advice and strategies to promote healthy aging in Massachusetts. The Council held meetings throughout the state, received input from several expert panels and from more than 500 Massachusetts residents.

“What we heard underscores how important older residents are to the vibrancy of our communities, to the strength of our economy, and to the social fabric of the Commonwealth,” said **Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders**, who co-chaired the Council along with retired social worker and philanthropist **Eileen Connors**. “Council members have produced a thoughtful, comprehensive and actionable blueprint that provides concrete recommendations to address key economic, housing and transportation opportunities presented by our growing population of older residents.”

“If we are fortunate, each of us will grow old someday. When we do, we want to be able to live as independently as we can, in a place we call home that values not only our contributions of yesterday but what we can offer today and tomorrow,” said **Mrs. Connors**. “The Council’s first year of work provides a roadmap for both near and long-term actions to ensure that Massachusetts is creating a state that supports all of our residents, both now and as they grow older.”

The panel delivered a [report](#) documenting its first nine months of work. It identified opportunities to make the Commonwealth the most age-friendly state for all people. Those opportunities include:

- Improving economic security
- Ensuring access and affordability of health and supportive services to help residents maintain maximum independence as they age
- Promoting age-friendly communities
- Facilitating connection and engagement and reducing isolation of older adults and caregivers.

In addition to outlining broad areas for further work, the Council also recommended the Administration focus on ten initial priorities:

1. Declare Massachusetts as an Age-Friendly State
2. Include age-friendly best practices in the Community Compact program, agreements between state and local governments that would allow communities to leverage state funding to improve facilities and services to accommodate an aging population, including those with dementia
3. Promote the development of an age-friendly employer designation
4. Increase participation in employer-sponsored retirement plans, and explore options for those without access to such plans
5. Support caregivers through increased information and awareness efforts
6. Promote and update property tax deferral programs that allow older residents options to remain in their homes and communities
7. Consider options, including new sources of capital, to increase production of accessible, affordable, service-enriched housing
8. Quickly scale and replicate successful age-friendly pilot projects, such as ride-sharing
9. Become the Silicon Valley for innovative technology, products, and services related to aging, and
10. Begin changing perceptions and address ageism with specific training and communication tools

“Massachusetts has always been a leader in policies, programs and services for an aging population. However, these recommendations provide a tremendous opportunity for us to encourage community spirit, tap into the wisdom of older adults and the work of communities as we plan for a future that includes all of our residents, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, or income level,” said **Secretary of Elder Affairs Alice Bonner**. “Becoming an age-friendly state isn’t just about helping someone else. When we support an older person to continue to live and contribute in their community, we are investing in

our own futures.”

The Administration has already begun next steps by organizing several workgroups to implement initial priorities, and continue planning for long-term proposals. The workgroups will report back to the Council, which will continue to meet regularly.

Also today, Eric J. Schneidewind, national AARP Board president, presented the Governor with the official certification welcoming Massachusetts into the AARP’s Network of Age-Friendly states, fulfilling a pledge made by Gov. Baker during his State of the Commonwealth Address in January, and one of the Council’s recommendations.

“On behalf of AARP, I am delighted to acknowledge the commitment of Massachusetts to become an age-friendly state, only the second in the nation to take this step. Thanks to so many dedicated partners, you are setting an example for the rest of the country, helping to create even more communities that are great places for ALL,” **Mr. Schneidewind said.**

The Tufts Health Foundation, one of the earliest and strongest supporters of the age-friendly movement in the region, took the opportunity to announce its latest leadership initiative. Beginning next year, the Foundation will invest \$250,000 over five years to accelerate Massachusetts’ planning efforts, and challenges other philanthropic organizations to recognize the importance of investing in initiatives addressing issues affecting older people.

“We are proud to support the work to make our cities and towns great places to grow up and grow old. We encourage others to join and support this movement to ensure our communities work for all residents. As the only regional funder exclusively focused on healthy aging, we want to thank Governor Baker and his team for their leadership in changing the conversation on aging in the Commonwealth. The commitment to creating an age-friendly state that values inclusion and equity will transform our communities,” **said Nora Moreno Cargie, president of Tufts Health Plan Foundation and vice president for corporate citizenship for Tufts Health Plan.**

[Read the full report](#) of the Governor’s Council to Address Aging in Massachusetts.

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